

## TWO TRACKS ACRES NEWSLETTER

September 2012



### Frustrations for Animal Farmers

This year some of the most valuable lessons we've learned have included what's difficult about being an animal farmer. The cost of grain and hay is higher than usual because of the draught. Many corn farmers are choosing to till their crops under and collect insurance rather than sell their corn because of lack of water. As young farmers, access to land is a big obstacle, and one of the greatest barriers for those starting out in the business. Luckily, Richard has helped us out significantly in this respect. One of the most frustrating obstacles of being a meat producer in Washtenaw County is that there are no meat processing facilities nearby.

Regulations regarding meat are funny. There aren't many when it comes to live animals. Sure, you have your limits on how many hogs are allowed within a certain acreage, and on waste management. But these don't apply until a person raises 125 hogs. For chickens, the number is 5,000 (of course, rules are different if you live in a residential area.) But overall, people can have A LOT of animals before regulations kick in. I should say *live* animals. Once they are dead is when all the hoopla begins.



If a person wishes to sell meat commercially, s/he needs to get it processed at a USDA certified processing plant. The nearest one for chickens is an hour and a half away, and for pigs it's all the way to Union City, MI: about a two hour trip. The animals must be transported live and are not allowed to be killed on farm. This means everyone is stressed, people and animals alike, as you make the long haul across the state. And once you do get your cuts of meat, you need a license to store them. Regulations are good because they make sure that the food we eat is safe. However, as our society has drifted from a local food economy, a farmer's options for meat production have narrowed. Sometimes you can get an exemption if you process less than 1,000 chickens a year. So now, it's usually impossible for you, the customer, to get meat that hasn't traveled at least four hours in a vehicle. That's as local as it gets, unless you have a personal relationship with your farmer and the transaction can take place informally.

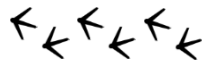
## Daily Antics at the Farm

There are now just three pigs here at Two Tracks Acres. They all have their own distinct personalities and habits. One, the bossy pig, takes great pleasure in lying down in the feed trough. Every time we pour



food in, it will jump into the trough, nose the others away, and lie down. I never knew a pig could lie down and eat at the same time. This is why animal farmers space bars across their feeding stations, so that all the pigs have a fair chance of eating. Another, the itchy pig, will scratch itself at great length on anything immobile by rubbing its back against it. This wasn't so much of a problem in the past, but is now becoming a nuisance. We've lost at least one pig hut to the 150 pound mound of pig that's constantly knocking into it. Luckily Taik is a great handyman.

The chickens get their weekly dose of play with the children that visit the farm. The other day I was walking to the house when I noticed a couple of chickens on top of their coop – an unusual site since they rarely jump up there. Then I noticed the kids chasing chickens around the yard. They caught two and brought them over to the coop, setting them on the top and laughing with delight as the birds awkwardly jumped off to the ground. They explained that they were making a 'play' and that the chickens were the stars. I didn't stick around to discover the main plot, but it looked like it had potential.



Fall is here! These are some dates you should be aware of:

Saturday, October 27, 1-5 pm **"Sausage and Bacon Making Workshop"** at Tantre. Please RSVP at least a week ahead of time.

The last pickups of the season are on the following dates:

- Half and Chicken share Wednesday pickup ends Wednesday November 14
- Half and Chicken share Saturday pickup ends Saturday November 17
- Full share Wednesday pickup ends Wednesday November 21
- Full share Saturday pickup ends Saturday November 24

(If you would like to pick up your last share earlier because of Thanksgiving, just let us know)

Thank you all who replied to the survey. It was extremely helpful feedback. We will be in touch soon with more plans for next year.

Thank you, Be Well!